



The Insider

www.senate.mi.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

January 20, 2006

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a library near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See schedule for details.

Mickey's Blog: Spring Cleaning

The holidays are over.

Everyone had been back to the grind for a few weeks now.

But it always clears my head to get away from Lansing for a couple of weeks, and then return energized and ready to tackle the world.

One of my New Year's Resolutions was to reorganize my office. That's a fancy way of saying clear out three years of accumulated junk. So Tuesday and Wednesday evenings this week I spent going through stacks of publications and studies until past midnight. It's very peaceful at night in the Senate Office Building. There are no calls or meetings or interruptions. You can focus and get a lot done.

You would not believe how much stuff we get. We get mountains of paper, and it is hard to get through it all when sessions and committees run long. You tend to put it aside in the busy times, and it stacks up.

Rome was not built in a day, so my rule of thumb is to work through the stacks until my large office garbage can is overflowing. Then I go work on something else. I had one stack next to my desk of studies and annual reports and publications that had reached from the floor to the height of my desk, so I tackled that first. They all had something in them that interested me, which is why I saved them to begin with.

I figured I had 3 basic options with these reports:

1. Read them
2. Give them to an intern to summarize
3. Put them in a new stack

I figured option 3 was a bad one.

As I worked through the pile, I was especially pleased when I was able to give two 500-page reports to my intern Chris, regarding how well the standardized Iowa test aligns with our grade school curriculum. I read the one paragraph summary, which says it aligns very well. But that is the conclusion of an independent company hired by the testing company to see how well they match up. So there's bound to be an argument about how independent, thorough, and accurate the report is. And "aligns very well," won't get you very far in an argument.

Aligns very well as compared to what? Aligns well in every subject, or are some better than others? All these issues need exploration. Since I have a bill to replace the grade school MEAP with a standardized test like the Iowa, this arcane subject interests me. I see it as a follow up to the replacement of the much-criticized High School MEAP with the college entrance ACT, which was a bill I got passed two years ago.

I told Chris the next day, as I handed him the reports, that this was a great opportunity to become the guru of testing. After reading these 1,000 pages he will know more about testing alignment than just about anybody.

He gave me one of those looks like, "Why don't you just spit in my face, and tell me it's rain?" But he's a good kid, and will do the work. Chris wants to go to law school after he graduates, so someday he will look back on these reports with fondness.

I figure by mid-February my office space will be completely reorganized.

Then I can turn to my next housekeeping task.

Desk drawers.

Proposed Changes to High School Graduation Requirements

Over the next couple of months, the Michigan Legislature will be debating legislation that would raise the minimum graduation requirements for high school students.

In December 2005, the State Board of Education passed a resolution calling for the creation of a new and rigorous set of criteria called the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Hearings on the proposal started this week.

The Michigan Merit Curriculum would require high school students to complete four years of English Language Arts; one year of Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, and an additional math class in the senior year; one year of Biology, Physics or Chemistry, and an additional year of science; three years of social science, including a semester of civics and a semester of economics; one year of health/physical education; two years of world languages, and one year of visual and performing arts.

Current state law only requires one semester of civics and allows local school boards to establish additional graduation requirements.

As this proposal is further considered by the Michigan Legislature, it is subject to change. However, I would like to hear from you. What do you think of the proposed new graduation requirements? Feel free to e-mail me your thoughts and I will publish some of your responses in the next edition.

Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 12:30 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times
(Comcast Channel 18)

*Please note that Sterling Heights/Utica/Clinton Township will show the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 5 and Wide Open West Channel 10. Clinton Township will air the TV Insider Show at various times during the last week of every month. Roseville can see the TV Insider Show on Comcast Channel 18.

Coffee Hours

*Please note that since the District Office is in Roseville, I do not have set coffee hours in Roseville. However, I encourage you to visit the Roseville office. We even have a coffee pot. Everyone is welcome to attend the coffee hours and discuss their issues and concerns.

January 30
7-9 p.m.

Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library
(40900 Romeo Plank Drive)
Clinton Township

February 6
7-9 p.m.

Location: Sterling Heights Public Library
(40255 Dodge Park Road)
Sterling Heights

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